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STATINTL

Today and Tomorrow . . . By Walter Lippmann

Cheating and Espionage

SENATOR DODD has said that "there is one supreme question which the Senate must ask about any test ban treaty: does it provide reasonable protection against cheating by the Soviets?" This is an important question, and the hearings now being held before the Joint Atomic Energy Committee are focused on it. But it is not the supreme question.



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The supreme question is whether the U. S. A. and the U. S. S. R. can agree not to do any more testing in the hope of changing the existing balance of power in nuclear weapons. This would mean, it is agreed on both sides, an acceptance of the fact that while both sides are now capable of inflicting devastating damage, the American arsenal is bigger and more versatile than the Soviet's. The purpose of the treaty would be to slow the refinement of the nuclear art, refraining from further testing in the hope of achieving an absolute superiority.

THE HOPE of achieving an absolute superiority exists among some scientists and some military men in both countries. It does not exist by any means among all scientists or all military men. If either country could, for example, achieve a perfectly effective anti-missile missile, it would hereby wipe out the menace of the other side's whole nuclear armament. Or if either side could make a bomb so powerful that it could destroy the whole power of the other to retaliate, it would have absolute superiority.

Such a hope of absolute superiority which neither side will ever probably explain

why the public surface argument against the proposed treaty is what it is—the Americans talking about cheating and the Russians talking about espionage.

The truth is that the Russians do not really mean that two or three on-site inspections are all right while seven or eight would be espionage which would undermine the security of the Soviet Union. What the Russians mean is that if they offer fewer inspections than Mr. Kennedy thinks he can accept and still get the treaty ratified, they will have proved that they want to stop testing and they will still be able to test. Beside the ingrained Russian reluctance to open their country, there is the much more matter-of-fact feeling that if they test, they may achieve absolute superiority. On our side, the truth is that Senator Dodd and his mentor, Dr. Teller, are not primarily concerned with cheating. Dr. Teller at least, if I have read his public statements correctly, is primarily concerned with avoiding any treaty which will slow down the development of nuclear weapons. The most vocal critics at the moment in this country may say they want a fool-proof treaty. What they really want is not to stop testing.

FOR MYSELF, I do not take the view that they are necessarily wrong. If they would quit talking as if they had some kind of superior patriotism, the perfectly arguable issue which is not yet fully resolved could be discussed. I think that the real issue should be brought up to the surface and that we should have a full debate on whether, for the sake of peace and of our own national interests, it is better to slow down nuclear development by banning tests or to stimulate development by continuing the tests.

This is the real question both in this country and in the Soviet Union. Our fear of cheating and their fear of espionage are cover arguments used by men who in their hearts believe that they must find a way to continue to test without outraging world opinion. Four more on-site inspections than the Soviet Union has already offered will not reveal much of anything which this country does not already know about the Soviet military establishment. But those few extra inspections might enable the President to get a treaty ratified, and that is precisely what those who want to go on testing in the Soviet Union do not want to see. Nor is there any serious dispute that with our present improved methods of detection including a few on-site inspections, the chances of perfectly safe and undetectable cheating on a profitable scale are close to zero.

THE STRONGEST argument for continuing to test is that our nuclear scientists will languish and disperse if they cannot put their theories to the test of experiment. For it is still possible to make the conclusive tests in laboratories. It is true therefore that the proposed treaty is the first formal attempt in modern times to inhibit the growth of scientific knowledge.

The argument in favor of such a treaty is that, as regards world peace, an agreement on so vital a matter would be a breakthrough which could open the way to other agreements. And, as regards the American national interest and the interest of the Western Alliance, our security will be enhanced if the Soviet Union will accept the existing balance of nuclear forces.

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